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SUBJECT: CODEL LINCOLN-MCCOLLUM MEETING WITH EGYPTIAN  
PARLIAMENTARIANS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY.

¶1. (SBU) Summary. A Congressional delegation comprised of Representatives Betty McCollum (D-MN) and Lincoln Davis (D-TN) met with Egyptian Peoples' Assembly Speaker Fathi Surour and fellow members of parliament on July 2. Surour and his colleagues were highly critical of USG bilateral and regional foreign policy. He contended that opposition parties in Egypt actively participate ) and freely criticize ) the Egyptian government. Both sides expressed gratitude for the USAID funded parliamentary exchange program which facilitated the visit. No Muslim Brotherhood parliamentarians attended the meeting. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Speaker Surour and fellow parliamentarians, including Peoples' Assembly Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Mustapha El-Fekki and Al Wafd party leader Mahmoud Abaza, hosted Representatives McCollum and Davis, and two staffers, July 2 at the Peoples' Assembly. Surour agreed with McCollum and Davis on the value of parliamentary exchange programs, and spoke at length on foreign policy, praising Egypt,s "positive role" in several crises (Iraq, Lebanon, Iran, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict), and criticizing USG policy, arguing that America has "created problems" in Iraq, and "allowed" Iran to increase its regional influence. According to him, the U.S. administration has not done anything to solve the Israel-Palestinian problem -- "the key to regional peace, and stability in Egypt."

¶3. (SBU) Surour said that the 88 "independent" Muslim Brotherhood members of the People's Assembly represent a "trend we recognize" both in Egypt and regionally. He said that Iranian support of Hamas is proof that Muslims are united in spite of Shi,a-Sunni differences. On human rights, Surour said that Guantanamo and other issues diminish America,s standing to criticize Egypt. He complained about President Bush's June 5 Prague speech, criticizing American "fascination" with imprisoned Al Ghad Party leader Ayman Nour and noted civil society leader Saad Eddin Ibrahim. People,s Assembly Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Mustapha El-Fekki joined in this criticism, and added that conditioning USG assistance on internal matters was a threat to Egyptian "dignity."

¶4. (SBU) Surour introduced Al Wafd party leader Mahmoud Abaza as the "opposition," and said that the two may argue but respect each other,s viewpoint, and are free to criticize each other. Abaza agreed, and then reiterated Surour,s critique of USG foreign policy before making a vague call for democratic reform, saying that Egypt ) with its long history as a "centralized nation" - must adjust to modern notions of democracy.

¶5. Representatives McCollum and Davis did not clear this message.  
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